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THE RELATIONS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WITH
THE ENGLISH LIBERALS 1774-1789

BY

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A. B. University of Illinois, 1919

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

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IN

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

November 30 1921

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY

SUPERVISION BY *Martha Harriet Dubois*

ENTITLED *The Relations of Benjamin Franklin
with the English Liberals 1714-1789*

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF *Master of Arts*

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INTRODUCTION

No more striking instance of the diversity of opinion in English political circles in respect to the American Revolution can be found than the fact that one of the leading spirits of that Revolution maintained throughout the struggle a wide circle of sympathetic friends who were at the same time loyal British subjects, many of whom held prominent political offices. Benjamin Franklin had, during two extended missions in England, acquired the acquaintance and friendship of many Liberals. The relationships between himself and these friends and acquaintances, any possible influence that he might have exercised through them on the course of events before, during, and at the close of the Revolution, constitutes the theme of this discussion.

A clear understanding of the political conditions on the eve of the Revolution involves a knowledge of those conditions during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

For the purposes of greater religious or economic freedom, numbers of British subjects had established colonies on the eastern coast of North America during the seventeenth century. Left much to themselves during the first one hundred years, they developed representative governments with a large measure of control over local affairs and established a thriving trade, especially with the West Indies.¹ The Navigation Act of 1660 sought to secure to Great

¹Channing, History of the United States, II, Chapter 1.

Britain greater benefits from her commerce, first by requiring certain colonial exports to pass through England, and second by confining the carrying trade to ships of the British Empire.¹ The first act in restraint of trade to arouse serious protest on the part of the Colonists was the Molasses Act of 1733. This aimed at the profitable trade with the Spanish and French West Indies. Since these acts were not strictly enforced before 1760, colonial commerce continued to grow, while little friction between Britain and her colonies resulted.

The accession of George III to the throne of England in 1760 marked a new era in British politics, both at home and abroad. The Revolution of 1688 and the reign of William III had established the principle that the Crown was dependent upon Parliament.² From that time until the accession of George III, a growing cabinet system had been wresting the actual government from the hands of the King. A small number of Whig families had come into control. Walpole and the Pelhams dominated English politics until 1754.³ Politics again fell into confusion; there was a break-up of the Old Whig party into factions; and when George III ascended the throne, he attempted to secure to the Crown its lost power by a destruction of party rule.⁴ He stood aloof from parties and gathered about himself a number of men known as "King's friends", who became his advisers. None of them stood well politically. There were two

¹Ibid., II, 27.

²Laski, Political Thought from Locke to Bentham, 27.

³Leadham, History of England (Hunt's "Political History of England") IX, 430.

⁴Alvord, Mississippi Valley in British Politics, I, 22 f.

other groups who also championed the King and whose ideal of government was patterned after Bolingbroke's "Patriot King." The first of these groups was composed of a number of unattached Whigs, who had been trained under the Dukes of Bedford and Cumberland; who were unattached; and who hoped by championing the King to secure offices. The second group constituted the Scotch members of Parliament. The leader of this group was Lord Kames. Disunited and in a minority, as these groups were, it was necessary for the King to secure the support of one or more of the Whig factions. To accomplish this, his plan of a "broad bottom" ministry^{was} developed.

Of the many Whig factions, the Pittites and their offshoot, the Grenvillites, were the only ones that professed adherence to Bolingbroke's ideal of government, the former more than the latter. Yet in actual practice, Pitt as a Prime Minister was distasteful to the King because of his dominating personality. One of the first acts of George III was to rid himself of Pitt. He accomplished this October 5, 1761¹, and substituted Bute, a Tory whose ideas of government and foreign policy were similar to his own.²

The remnant of the Old Whigs inherited the principles of the Revolution of 1688. Consequently, they held power only once during the reign of George III. Not long after 1760 the power of this faction fell into the hands of Rockingham, whose talent for statesmanship was mediocre. In later years, however, this faction

¹Hunt, History of England, X, 31.

²Nivernois... a critic of Bute said a few months later that the ministry wanted peace for three reasons: (1) to triumph over their enemies; (2) to give the King an opportunity to extinguish the factions and to establish his personal authority; (3) not to have to sue for peace, owing to a lack of funds. To Praslin, September 24, 1762. Quoted in Williams, Basil, Life of William Pitt, II, 139.

came to be dominated by its most brilliant statesman, Edmund Burke, and it stood for reform "in a mild way".¹

In addition to the Grenvillites and the Pittites, which faction contained among its "adherents the ablest minds of England", the principal Whig offshoots were the Bedfordites and the followers of the Duke of Cumberland. The former, better known as the Bloomsbury Gang, represented the remnants of the old aristocratic party. The latter joined Bute and gave him assistance in making the Treaty of Peace. Their chief purpose in this was the attainment of office. After the conclusion of the Peace, which in spite of Pitt's absence reflected his imperialism, the King attempted to dominate politics and to bring the Colonies under closer supervision in accordance with seventeenth century imperialistic ideas. Grenville and the Bedfordite, who succeeded Bute, attempted to execute the King's imperialistic plans and at the same time to pay the war debt, by the passage of the Stamp Act. As is well known, this resulted in his resignation and in trouble with the Colonies which led to the Revolution. Meanwhile, remnants of the old Tory party, which drew its strength from the landed aristocracy, had begun to participate in politics. The first formation of the Leicester House faction was a beginning. After the accession of George III, they thronged to London and in time developed unity and political experience. When Lord North became Prime Minister in 1770, they had developed into his following.² Lacking the dominating personality of Walpole or Pitt, North was easily influenced to execute the King's will, which proved so disastrous in the conduct of the affairs of the Colonies.

¹Alvord, Mississippi Valley in British Politics, I, chapter 1.

²Ibid.,

During the first half of the eighteenth century, there had been developing on both sides of the Atlantic a spirit of democracy. It was much stronger in America where the population constituted almost entirely that element of the older civilizations that was most favorable to democracy; where economic and social conditions were conducive to its growth; and where the communities were a great distance from the restraining hand of the mother country. In contrast to the spirit of democracy that constituted so large an element of the Colonial Assemblies, that spirit, in England, had grown up outside of the House of Commons.

Since Locke had laid down his principles respecting the rights of man, signs of change in English political thought had appeared. Rousseau, whose Contrat Social was published in 1765, exerted a wide influence upon the Liberals of England. Too much credit should not be given him, however, for the seeds of Revolution had long since been sown, and only awaited a favorable opportunity to spread discontent broadcast. Such an opportunity presented itself when George III showed his intention of restoring the old order of government by the Crown alone.¹ The spirit of discontent spread most rapidly among the Non-conformists. First, under a union of Church and State, the desire to be free from religious restraint aroused a distrust of the political as well. Secondly, having been barred from political activities, they had turned their attention to trade and commerce. Restraints imposed in accordance with the mercantilist theories then practised by the government

¹Laski, Political Thought from Locke to Bentham, 188.

aroused their distrust of the State.¹ Foremost among the Revolutionists were Priestly and Price, both liberal clergymen. The former engaged his attention with an attack on the Established Church; the latter, with an attack on the Empire.² Both men preached the doctrine of the equality of man, and the responsibility of the State to the people. Perhaps the foremost figure of the Liberal movement was Edmund Burke. He was more conservative than Priestly and Price in that he revered tradition and the British Constitution, and advocated rather its purification than its overthrow. His Present Discontents, published in 1770, was the first Revolutionary production of first rank since the time of Hume.³ From that time, the Revolutionary movement made itself manifest in the House of Commons and through the press until it operated to modify the course of political events.

During these times of political upheaval, Benjamin Franklin had occasion to spend a number of years in England. As agent for the Colony of Pennsylvania from 1757 until 1762, and for both Pennsylvania and Massachusetts from 1764 until 1775,⁴ he came into contact with the current of political thought and action in England. "His many social qualities gained for him a wide circle of friends", especially among the Liberals and the Scientists. It was in his first sojourn, as agent of Pennsylvania, that most of the friendships which will be discussed in the following pages were

¹Ibid., 192.

²Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, II, 252.

³Laski, Political Thought from Locke to Bentham, 159.

⁴Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, I, 128, 460.

formed. That he had then formed personal ties with the mother country is shown in the following letter to Lord Kames in 1762, at whose home Franklin had visited in 1757.¹ "I am now waiting here only for a wind to waft me to America, but I cannot leave this happy island and my friends in it, without extreme regret, though I am going to a country and a people that I love."²

Two letters to Strahan indicate that at this time he considered seriously removing to England, so deep was his regard for it.³

His attachment to England was not based upon personal friendships; he showed pride in terming himself a Briton, and an interest in the extension of the British Empire.⁴ For instance, he observed to Kames in 1760 that "no one can more sincerely rejoice than I do on the reduction of Canada, and this is not merely as I am a Colonist, but as I am a Briton; I have long been of opinion that the foundations of the future grandeur and stability of the British Empire lie in America....."⁴ Another instance of this spirit is shown by a remark of Priestley. He observed that Franklin "saw no inconvenience from its (British Empire's) being extended over a great part of the globe."⁵

¹Franklin to Kames, January 3, 1760. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), IV, 6.

²Franklin to Kames, August 17, 1762. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), IV, 174.

³Franklin to Strahan, August 13, 1762; December 7, 1762. Ibid., 177, 181.

⁴Franklin to Kames, January 3, 1760. Ibid., 4.

⁵Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, 449.

Notwithstanding his loyalty to the mother country, Franklin early recognized the need of a change in the relationship that existed between Britain and her Colonies. That he had long been a leader in the agitation to change the form of government in Pennsylvania may have had some effect in turning his attention to this need. What his early ideas respecting a union between Britain and her Colonies should have been, may be ascertained to some extent from his letters to Governor Shirley in 1754, and from the Albany Plan of Union, which he proposed in the same year. In his letters to Governor Shirley, he opposed taxation by Parliament, without representation in that body, but he did not advocate a representation of the Colonies in Parliament. After protesting against the dissatisfaction which may be aroused in the Colonies as a result of exclusion from a voice in the Grand Council, and from taxation by "act of Parliament where they have no representative," he said that there was "no reason to doubt the readiness and willingness of the representatives they may choose, to grant from time to time such supplies for the defense of the country, as shall be judged necessary, so far as their abilities will allow....that the people in the colonies....are likely....to be better judges of their own expense than the Parliament of England at so great a distance."¹ From this, it would seem that Franklin, rather than have a representation of the colonies in Parliament, preferred the preservation of the local assemblies, with powers for taxation.²

¹ Franklin to Shirley, December 18, 1754. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), III, 232.

² For a further exposition of his views see Franklin to Strahan, 1769. Ibid., V, 238.

This would seem to be borne out in his Plan for Union of 1754. Here he advocated that the payment of expenses for the Colonies should be met with the money which was to be raised from "imposts, duties or taxes" that were to be levied by act of the President-General and the Grand Council.¹ That a representation of the Colonies in Parliament might have been successfully accomplished, he admitted in a letter to Kames as late as 1766, but he added; "the time is now come when they are indifferent about it....and the time will come when they will certainly refuse it....., but if such a union were now established....it would probably subsist as long as Britain shall continue a nation."²

Whether Franklin's efforts to transfer the government of Pennsylvania had any influence upon his larger outlook of a union of all the Colonies under the Crown is uncertain. He himself asserted in An Account of the Transactions relating to Governor Hutchinson's Letters, that "from a thorough inquiry (on occasion of the Stamp Act) into the nature of the connection between Britain and the Colonies, I became convinced that the bond of their union is not the Parliament but the King." Franklin considered him to be the rightful supreme authority over all of the Colonies and a means of preserving the peace.³ His previous writings show that before 1765 such a theory was a favorite of his. The first evidence of any suspicion, on Franklin's part, that the King was implicated in the difficulties with the Colonies may be found in a letter to his

¹For papers relating to a Plan of Union, ibid., III, 221.

²Franklin to Kames, January 6, 1766. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IV, 156.

³Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IV, 408.

son, when he said that "only by some Painstaking and proper management, the wrong Impressions he (George III) has received may be removed which is perhaps the only chance America has for obtaining soon the redress she aims at."¹

With such views as Franklin held respecting the rights of the Colonies and with his knowledge of the source of their difficulties, it is not surprising that he exerted an influence toward bringing about a better understanding between Britain and her Colonies. In the hope of accomplishing this end, he secured the publication of Dickinson's Farmer's Letters in London, urging the need of a better understanding of the prejudices and misapprehensions of the Colonists, on the part of Englishmen.² Frequently, he wrote editorials for such leading papers as the London Chronicle, one of which attempted to explain the attitude of the Colonists toward Britain in relation to taxation, commerce, and the late war.³ Perhaps his greatest influence was exerted through his liberal friends and certain political leaders with whom he succeeded in coming into contact.

To summarize Franklin's viewpoint in regard to the relations of the Colonies to the Mother Country in 1774, the following conclusions may be drawn. First, he cherished a pride in being called a Briton. Second, he believed that the parts of the British Empire benefited through this union. Priestley, in his

¹The views advocated in Some Good Whig Principles endorsed by Franklin and supposed to have been written about 1768, illustrate his views regarding government by the people. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), II, 372.

²For Preface to Farmer's Letters see Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), IV, 256.

³London Chronicle, January 7, 1767.

Memoirs, said that a favorite idea of Franklin was a union of the British Empire in all its parts. "He was wont to compare it to a beautiful China vase, which when once broken could never be put together again."¹ Lecky relates a conversation of Franklin with Burke on the eve of the Revolution, in which the latter expressed the greatest concern at the impending separation of the two countries. He said "America would never again see such happy days as she had passed under the protection of England"....and that "ours was the only instance of a great Empire in which the most distant parts and members had been as well governed as the metropolis and its vicinage."²

Third, Franklin exerted all his powers to bring about a reconciliation. In the words of Priestley, "His constant advice to his countrymen, he always said, was to bear everything from England, however unjust, saying that it could not last long."³

There is much truth in Franklin's own statement that to the Americans he attempted to represent unsatisfactory measures as "the schemes of an administration" rather than as royal or national measures, and that he had pictured the King "as a good and gracious prince"; while to the British, he represented the Americans as loyal British subjects having no desire for independence.⁴

¹Priestley, Memoirs, 450.

²Lecky, American Revolution, edited by J. A. Woodburn, 141.

³Memoirs of Doctor Joseph Priestley, 450

⁴Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), IV, 410.

CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHMENT OF FRANKLIN'S FRIENDSHIPS

Before discussing Franklin's relationships with the English Liberals, it will be necessary to limit the term and to select, if possible, from his wide circle of English friends, those who stand as typical Liberals and whose contact with him was of political importance or with whom his friendship was deepest and most lasting. The term Liberal referred to those whose political outlook was what would today be called Progressive. They stood for the adaptation of the existing laws and customs to the changing conditions. With different men it meant different interpretations. Chatham was progressive in that he stood for a new colonial policy; namely, a greater consideration for the needs and wishes of the Colonists as such, rather than the benefit they might secure to Britain. Burke, an admirer of the British Constitution, advocated a purification of existing political machinery.

With the exception of William Strahan, who was an adherent to the King's principles, Franklin's friends who are discussed here were in opposition to the Crown and to the 'King's Friends'. They belonged to such factions of the Old Whigs as the Pittites and the Rockinghams, if they adhered to any political connection.

For the purpose of this discussion, Franklin's friends may be divided into four groups: first, liberal clergymen, for whose society he showed a peculiar aptitude;¹ second, the philosophers

¹Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, I, 545.

and scientists;¹ third, men with whom the subjects of common interest were chiefly of a political nature; and fourth, men whose relationships with Franklin apparently extended no further than a mutual admiration and the affairs of state.

Strahan, the most intimate of Franklin's friends, with the exception of Priestley, can scarcely belong to the above classes. Their mutual interests were based upon their interests in the printer's trade and upon books. This friendship was casually formed in 1743, when Franklin answered an indirect inquiry of Strahan's in regard to a young journeyman printer. The life-long friendship that developed came to include the families of both men.² In the summer of 1757, Franklin and Strahan met for the first time at the home of Peter Collinson. A comparison of their correspondence after this meeting with that before shows that their friendship became, as a result, more intimate. For instance, Franklin closed his first letter to Strahan with "Your humbl servt unknown." Rarely, before 1762, did he use any closing other than "Your humbl servt." After that date, he used such terms as "Yours affectionately," "Your much obliged and affectionate friend," and "Yours sincerely." Then, too, Franklin had come to address him as "Dear Straney."³

That the subject of politics was not foreign to their

¹Franklin was elected to membership in the Royal Society for Scientists, 1756, before his first residence in London. Franklin to Collinson, November 5, 1756. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), III, 346.

²(a)For sketch of Strahan's life, see Gentlemen's Magazine, 1785, II, 574, 636-9; (b)For this letter, with a number of others, hitherto unpublished, see Atlantic Monthly, LXI, 21 f.

³Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) IV.

intercourse is shown by a number of letters, in two of which Franklin urged Strahan to inform him, politically, because he was in the 'Secret of Affairs'; and in a third of December 19, 1763, Franklin thanked Strahan for the "Feast of Politics" he had given him.¹ At a later date, Franklin called upon Strahan to place the Pennsylvania Resolves in the London Chronicle. The frank discussion mentioned in the preceding chapter, in which these men engaged, on taxation of the Colonies by Parliament, shows a sincere effort on the part of each to secure the other's point of view. Upon Franklin's return to England in 1763, their friendship was renewed, but it received a temporary check at the outbreak of the war, for Strahan was the King's printer and an ardent Tory.

Among the liberal clergymen numbered as Franklin's friends, Priestley and Price are the most prominent. Both men exerted some influence upon their countrymen in favor of liberal policies toward America as well as exerting some influence upon many liberal Americans. Of the friendship of Hutton, a Moravian minister, with Franklin, few traces exist, other than those relating to his part in the peace negotiations of 1783.

While preaching at Nantwich, where Priestley removed in 1758, he spent a month of each year in London. He there frequented the London Coffee House where he first met Dr. Price and Dr. Franklin. During his employment as a Librarian for Shelburne, Priestley saw a great deal of Franklin. Since difficulties with America broke out

¹ Franklin to Strahan (1) December 7, 1762; (2) June 28, 1763; and (3) December 19, 1763. Writings of Franklin (Smyth ed.) IV, 204, 212.

² London Chronicle, August 7, 1769.

at this time, their attention was diverted from science to politics.¹ That Franklin may have been the guiding spirit in this diversion of their attention is possible. Evidences that point to this possibility are: first, although an advocate of distinctly Revolutionary political ideas, Priestley's works and testimony bear evidence to the fact that he was slightly interested in politics. Science and theology engaged his attention.² Second, in 1768, at the suggestion of Dr. Franklin and with some assistance, Priestley published a pamphlet on the relations of the Colonies to Britain. It was An Address to Dissenters.³ On the other hand, Priestley had previously published The Present State of Liberty without^{the} suggestion or aid of Franklin.

When Franklin and Price met is uncertain; from Priestley's account, it seems that it was not later than Franklin's first sojourn in London. At that time both men were members of the Club of Honest Whigs which met at the London Coffee House. During this same period, both men also met at St. Paul's Coffee House.⁴ Moreover, Franklin frequently attended Price's sermons when the latter preached at Newington Green. That their acquaintance was less intimate than was Franklin's with Priestley is indicated by the character and frequency of their correspondence. Although in the case of the latter, their correspondence continued throughout the Revolution, Price has said that from mutual regard he and Franklin dropped their correspondence during the Revolution.⁵

¹Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, 50, 88.

²Ibid., 61, 148, 150.

³Ibid., 457.

⁴Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) X, 275 f.

⁵Price to Joan Derk. Ibid., 325.

Benjamin Vaughan, a Liberal London merchant who had many warm friends in America, was for thirty years a friend of Franklin.¹ It is impossible to determine from available correspondence, when their acquaintance was made, nor does it seem that the degree of intimacy between the two was great. The first available correspondence between the two was dated 1779, although from its context it is evident that a number of letters had previously passed between the two. It is also evident that the two were acquainted as early as 1760.

From the scanty correspondence available, it is clear that Edmund Burke, the real leader of the Rockingham faction, was a sincere friend of Franklin. There is nothing to show, however, that their friendship extended beyond a mutual admiration and their common sympathies respecting the Revolution. When they became acquainted is not known.

Shelburne, a follower of Pitt and a patron of Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley, first made Franklin's acquaintance when the latter was acting as agent for Pennsylvania. The first reference to this acquaintance records their having dined together and having discussed such practical colonial affairs as the reduction of American expense and the settlement of boundary disputes,² but there seem to be no traces of anything more than an acquaintance of a formal character. Both men were on terms of intimacy with Dr. Price, Dr. Priestley, and Cooper; both were friends of Vaughan.

¹(a) Maine Historical Society Collections. Ser. 1, VI, 86.

(b) Alger, Englishmen in the French Revolution, 91.

²Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), VII, 355, 365.

Chatham did not make Franklin's acquaintance until 1774; then it was deliberately made for the purpose of ascertaining political conditions in the Colonies. That divests this relationship of the character of a personal friendship.

The range of Franklin's acquaintances and friends has not by any means been exhausted. Among them were such men as the wealthy Peter Collinson, in whose home Franklin visited when on his first sojourn in England and where he met Straham and many other friends¹; the Bishop of St. Asaph, whose famous sermon so reflected the views of Franklin that the latter was accused of having written it by many contemporaries and by even so able an historian as Sparks²; and Cooper, who frequently acted as a go-between for Franklin and Lord North.³ Many were the friends who found hospitable cheer at his home in Craven Street, and his genial face was frequently seen at Ludgate Hill, where he dined with scientists, clergymen, and philosophers.

¹Parton, Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, I, 389.

²Ibid., 538.

³Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin (Bigelow ed.), X, 14.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL OPINIONS OF THE ENGLISH LIBERALS AND THEIR
RELATIONS TO FRANKLIN, 1774-1776

Nothing represents more clearly the cosmopolitan character of Franklin's friendships than the fact that one of his most intimate acquaintances was William Strahan, the King's printer and an adherent of Royal policies during the Revolution.¹ Few persons had acquired with Franklin such a degree of intimacy as had Strahan. It is evident from their correspondence that their intercourse during the years preceding the Revolution had been frank and frequent. The questionnaire that Strahan sent to Franklin in 1768 indicates in its effort to justify a retention of the duty on tea, that their ways, politically, were drifting irreconcilably apart.² The last extant letter that passed between them on the eve of the Revolution was written by Strahan on September 6, 1775.³ He mentioned having received Franklin's of July 7, which, written soon after the latter's arrival in America, reflected his change in attitude toward the Colonies' situation. To this, Strahan replied

¹Stephens and Lee, Dictionary of National Biography, XIX, 19.

²Strahan to Franklin, November 21, 1769. Reprinted at the author's request in the London Chronicle, July 28, 1778.

³Strahan to Franklin, September 6, 1775. Pennsylvania Magazine of History, 1903, XXVII, 165 f. Note: W. C. Bruce in his Franklin Self-revealed has overlooked this letter as well as others written during the Revolution. See his book, I, 398. For other letters written in 1777, see I. M. Hays, Calendar of the Papers of Franklin in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, I, 205, 249, 311, 364, and Stevens, Facsimile of Mss., no. 1893.

that he was sorry that Franklin thought that "matters are now gone so far as to be past all accommodation." In this letter, Strahan revealed clearly how little the Liberal views of Franklin had influenced his attitude toward the Colonists. He deplored their unwisdom, saying that "perhaps the wisest heads and honestest hearts on your side of the water do not see all the consequences of such an event," and he pictured to Franklin a dark future for America, should she separate from England. Yet, in spite of his bitterness, he seemed sincerely to have desired that "something may be luckily hit upon to stop the Progress of this unnatural and destructive quarrel."¹

Strahan's political views scarcely place him as a Liberal. That his friendship with Franklin survived a Revolution in which the two were on opposing sides, shows that each possessed a remarkable spirit of tolerance and mutual affection. But, politically, neither seems in any way to have influenced the other either directly or indirectly.

Of an entirely different character were Franklin's relations with Chatham, Burke, and Pownall. These men, in varying degrees, shared with Franklin a sympathy for the Colonists' cause. In like manner did their friendships with Franklin vary, although all were similar in that their friendly relationships were apparently based only upon their political interests.

With Chatham, Franklin had had no personal acquaintance before 1774. From 1757 to 1763, when Franklin was agent for Pennsylvania, he had attempted without success to secure an audience

¹Ibid., 166

with him, and had had to content himself with indirect communications through Potter and Wood, the Secretaries of Chatham.¹ As Minister, however, his attitude toward the Colonists had been such as to inspire both their confidence and patriotism. For instance, he had been opposed to taxing them for the conduct of the war. On the contrary, he had, in the case of the Southern Colonies, suggested that the Mother Country lighten their financial burdens.² So firm were his convictions against the taxation of America by Parliament that he protested against it before the House of Commons in 1766.³ Much the same kind of argument was used here as in a later speech.

Toward the end of August, 1774, Chatham sought and held an interview with Franklin for the ostensible purpose of discussing the conditions in the Colonies. He expressed great regard and "Esteem for the people of that country, who he hoped, would continue firm and united in defending by all peaceable and legal means their constitutional Rights."⁴ Assured that the Colonists were not aiming at independence, he expressed his satisfaction with the interview, and urged Franklin to confer with him frequently in the future.

¹ Franklin to W. T. Franklin, March 22, 1775. Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin (Bigelow ed.) I, 276.

² Williams, Basil, Life of William Pitt. I, 299.

³ Franklin to W. T. Franklin, March 22, 1775. Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin (Bigelow ed.) I, 276.

Note: Von Ruville in his Life of Chatham, III, 289, apparently overlooked Pitt's interest in and sympathy for the Colonists before 1775. He attributed the "sudden interest" of Chatham in Colonial affairs to the apparent resemblance between the Revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution, because of the Declaration of Rights, October 14, 1774. See Journals of Congress, I, 63. Apparently, Von Ruville overlooked the conference to which Chatham called Franklin the preceding August, and the keen interest he then showed in Colonial affairs.

⁴ Ibid.

Yet there was one point upon which his and Franklin's views apparently differed. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Franklin's ideal of union between Britain and her Colonies was one under the Crown, with the Colonial Assemblies in charge of all local affairs, including taxation for all purposes. Chatham, on the other hand, had expressed his view of the situation thus:

"Although I love the Americans, as men prizing and setting a just value upon that inestimable blessing, liberty, yet if I could once persuade myself that they entertain the most distant intention of throwing off the legislative supremacy and great constitutional superintending power and control of the British legislature, I should myself be the very first ... to enforce that power by every exertion this country is capable of making."¹ Franklin, in accordance with Pitt's request, furnished him with news concerning the state of affairs in the Colonies, in a second conference, December 6, 1774, and the latter reiterated his "warm admiration for the people and wishes for their prosperity." He later proposed a motion to the House of Lords on January 20, 1775, to remove the troops from Boston, at which time he entered the House publicly with Franklin.² The motion failed, but its proposal was one of many evidences of the desire of the Opposition to bring about reconciliation. Later, after a number of private conferences with Franklin, Chatham, on February 1, 1775, presented a Plan of Reconciliation to the House of Commons.

Although this was at the time and has often since been imputed to Franklin, the latter denied having made any alteration in

¹Quoted in Von Ruville, Life of William Pitt, III, 273.

²Ibid., 290 f.

the plan. That it showed traces of his ideas seems untrue. Franklin did admit having "discussed the plan and gave as a cause for no alterations, the fact that neither man entertained any hope of its being accepted."¹ A comparison of Chatham's speech with Franklin's notes upon it reveals that the views of the two differed fundamentally.² For instance, Chatham emphasized the supremacy of the British legislature as well as of the Crown over the Colonists. Franklin's note in reference to that part of Pitt's plan suggested a doubt of the wisdom of this, when he said in one of his notes: "Perhaps if the legislative power of Parliament is owned in the Colonies, they will make a law to forbid the meeting of any Congress. . . ." ³ A second instance, Chatham suggested that the aforementioned Congress take into consideration "the making of a free grant to the King....of a certain perpetual revenue, subject to the disposition of the British Parliament, to be by them appropriated as they in their wisdom shall judge fit, to the alleviation of the national debt."⁴ Franklin, who was not anxious to see the Colonies bound permanently to grant a given revenue, preferred the making of grants for periods of three years. His comment upon the above mentioned proposition was, "if a permanent revenue, why not the same privileges in trade with Scotland?" In a third instance, Pitt justified the Crown's right to quarter troops

¹Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) V, 134 f.

²Ibid., 50 f.; Hansard, XVIII, 198 f.

³Chatham had suggested the recognition of the legality of a Continental Congress "on the 9th of May next ensuing in order then and there to take into consideration the making due recognition of the supreme legislative authority and superintending power of Parliament over the Colonies aforesaid." Ibid., 200.

⁴Ibid.

in the Colonies, but for the sake of expediency he suggested a declaration that such a military force could never be "lawfully employed to violate and destroy the just rights of the people." He based his justification on the fact that the Declaration of Right of 1688 had reference only to the consent of the British Parliament. That Franklin questioned this is shown by his comment, "Does the whole of the rights claimed in the Petition of Rights relate to England only?"

Not only does a comparative study of these show a fundamental divergence of views which would preclude the plan's having been Franklin's,¹ but a comparison with Pitt's earlier speeches shows that he had held in 1775 the same views as in 1766 in respect to the taxation of America and to the legislative supremacy of Parliament.² Moreover, the acquaintance with Franklin was not made until Chatham realized that the information he might receive would aid him in placing his views before Parliament. It may also be that he thought that by a display of an association with Franklin he could emphasize to the administration a disapproval of their policies. There is no evidence that Franklin influenced Pitt in the formulation of his Motion to withdraw the Troops from Boston or of his Provisional Act for settling the Troubles in America. By means of the impression that he made and, what is more important, through his assurance that independence was not even remotely desired by the Colonists, he influenced Pitt to put forth his utmost exertion to bring about a reconciliation with the Colonies.

¹Contrast with Von Ruville, William Pitt, III, 289 f., on Chatham's views in 1774-5.

²Williams, Basil, William Pitt, II, 190, 305 f.

Unlike Pitt's acquaintance with Franklin, Pownall's had been casually made, and their friendship had extended over a number of years. On October 7, 1753, Pownall landed in New York as the Secretary to Osborne, the new Governor of that Colony. Despondent because of the death of his wife, Osborne took his life not long after his arrival. De Lancey, a native of New York, became Governor, and Pownall was stranded. But Pownall did not remain idle during those months. He divided his time between Massachusetts, where he conferred with Governor Shirley, and New York. Indian troubles were serious at that time, and Pownall set about making a study of them. At the formal meeting of the Colonies, which was called for the purpose of uniting in defense against the French, and of coming to an understanding with the Six Nations, Pownall met the leading men of the Colonies, among them Franklin, with whom he formed a life-long friendship.¹ For the first time, he here became convinced of the claims of the Colonists and remained their advocate through life. One of Pitt's first appointments, when he became Prime Minister, was that of Pownall as "Captain-General and Commander-in-Chief of Massachusetts Bay in New England."² An account of Pownall's administration by Judge Minot, 1798, characterized it as "short but extremely successful." The Judge mentioned that only once in Pownall's administration did the old controversy in regard to the rights and prerogatives of the Governor and Assembly arise. That was "in the case of stationing troops on the frontier," and the Judge adds that the Governor "was not ill adapted to manage by apparent concessions." Not least among his

¹Pownall, Thomas Pownall, chapter III.

²Ibid., 71.

successes was the saving of public money that he afforded.¹ John Adams has added to Minot's testimony a fundamental reason for Pownall's success; namely, "Pownall was a Whig, a friend of liberty, a lover of his country, and he considered North America a part of his country as much as England, Scotland, or Ireland," and "Pownall was the most constitutional and national Governor, in my opinion, who ever represented the Crown in this province. He engaged in no intrigues, he favoured no conspiracies against the liberties of America."²

Soon after the fall of Pitt, Pownall was recalled and although he was appointed to the Governorship of South Carolina, which position offered increased opportunities for study, he resigned in 1761, and went to England. After more than a year with the campaigns in Germany, Pownall returned in 1763. Although he was offered any government in America, and realized that the possibility of a brilliant future was thus laid before him, he refused because he "had had occasion to experience the ignorance and false conceptions by which the men of business in England were prejudiced and perverted as to the state and affairs of our establishments in America."³ Having entered Parliament in January, Pownall delivered his maiden speech on behalf of the Colonies on May 16, 1767.⁴ Through the following years, on the eve of the Revolution, he "exerted all his powers to prevent the separation from

¹Ibid., 158.

²Adams to William Tudor. February 4, 1817. John Adams, Works, X, 241 f.

³Quoted in Pownall, Thomas Pownall, 172.

⁴Parliamentary History of England, XVI, 331.

the Colonies."¹ That Franklin knew of and appreciated these efforts was shown in a letter to Cooper, in which he remarked, "Your late Governor, Mr. Pownall, appears a hearty friend to America."² On the outbreak of the war, he approved of the use of "force to force" yet he maintained that a reorganization of the Colonial policy would have averted such a calamity.³ Of the many supposed authors of the Letters of Junius that appeared in 1767-8, Pownall has sometimes been considered to be the most likely. Among a number of reasons for this is the fact that both had come into close contact with political affairs, and that both criticized severely the conditions during Grafton's administration.⁴

From the above, it is clear that Pownall's position toward the Colonies until the actual outbreak of war was one that Franklin could well admire.

For the years 1774-6, there exists no Franklin-Pownall correspondence and Franklin, in his Memoirs, refers to the former only once. While speaking of politics and of Lord North at a dinner, Pownall had revealed his intentions of compromising with the Ministry, and had told Franklin that North had been much misunderstood and that he, Pownall, had spoken well to him of Franklin.⁵ The divergence of their opinions regarding the colonies has been ably shown by Charles A. Pownall. In a copy of Pownall's "Administration" Franklin had made a few comments. For instance: Pownall maintained that the Colonists "carried with them the Laws

¹Magazine of American History, XVI, 418.

²Franklin to Cooper, April 27, 1769. Writings of Benjamin Franklin, (Sparks ed.) VII, 442.

³Parliamentary History of England, XVIII, 322.

⁴Pownall, Thomas Pownall, 310 f.

⁵Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) V, 32.

of the Land"; Franklin contended that they carried only a "right to such a part of the Laws of the Land as they should judge advantageous." In a second instance, Pownall held that "all statutes enacted since the establishment of the colonies....do extend to and operate within the said colonies....in which statutes the same are specially named." Franklin doubted whether any act of Parliament should of right operate in the Colonies, although he admitted that "in fact some of them have and do operate."¹ Moreover, Pownall maintained throughout the supremacy of Parliament, with which view Franklin disagreed, although Pownall did advance the theory that in the future the relations of Britain to America should be based on compact.² There is, therefore, no evidence that either of these men modified the opinions of the other. That, of the men with whom Pownall came into contact in the New World and by whom he was influenced to take the Colonists' viewpoint, Franklin was among the foremost, seems possible. There is no evidence to show that his influence was more than this.

The last of Franklin's political friends to be considered is Edmund Burke. He was the real leader of the Rockingham connection, and held a seat in the House of Commons on the eve of and throughout the Revolution. That he and Franklin held each other in mutual respect is evident. There is, however, no available source information respecting the formation of their acquaintance, and references to their friendship are very few. The first, for the

¹For comparisons see Pownall, Thomas Pownall, 205, 224.

²Parliamentary History of England, XVIII, 988.

period 1774-76, is that Franklin bade Burke farewell the day before he sailed for America.¹ Since this meeting took place about a month before Burke introduced his Resolutions for Conciliation (March 22, 1775), it has been asserted that the former influenced the latter in the formation of this speech. The fact is that, although both men were Liberals and desired reconciliation, their ideas differed fundamentally. In the all-important question of taxation, Burke wished to remove the burden from the Colonies, merely because it would be expedient and conducive to better feeling. He avoided discussing the merits of the case.² Franklin, on the other hand, vigorously opposed taxation by Parliament (in 1774). His statement in 1766 respecting the Declaratory Act, that "the resolutions of right will give them very little concern if they are never attempted to be carried into practice," was merely approaching the controversy (with a conciliatory attitude) from the opposite extreme from which Burke approached it.³ Moreover, as an agent of New York since 1771, Burke had held an interest and a source of information that stimulated him to exert his power to prevent a rupture between the two countries. After the defeat of his Resolutions for Reconciliation with America, he sponsored a petition, May 15, 1775, in behalf of his New York constituents.⁴ On the same date Franklin

¹Macknight, Life of Edmund Burke, II, 108.

²Lecky, American Revolution, 197.

³Parliamentary History of England, XVIII, 506.

⁴Lecky, American Revolution, 96.

⁵Parliamentary History of England, XVIII, 478, 643.

wrote the only letter that 'apparently passed between them during this period. It was an appreciation, on behalf of the Colonists, of Burke's speech of the twenty-second of March.¹ Formal in character, there is nothing in this letter to show that there existed any degree of intimacy between the men.

Unlike his relationships with Chatham, Powmell, and Burke, Franklin's friendships with Priestley and Price were based upon mutual interests in science and in philosophy, as well as, if not more than, in politics.

Price, a Non-conformist clergyman and a friend of Shelburne, was, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, a member of the Club of Honest Whigs that met at the London Coffee House on Ludgate Hill. That scarcely any correspondence exists for this period is not surprising in view of the fact that Franklin met these friends frequently at the Club. Such bits of information as the following show the character of their intercourse. A Mr. Lindsay wrote to a Mr. Turner on January 17, 1775, that he had dined "yesterday with Doctors Price, Franklin, Priestley, and Mr. Quincy; no bad company." He added that they "began and ended with the Americans."² That their friendship on the eve of the Revolution was intimate is evident from a reference of Price's, in which he mentioned that "Dr. Franklin is returned to Philadelphia and will ... attend the Congress." He continued, "I have lost by his departure a friend that I greatly loved and valued."³ Price's liberal views in

¹Franklin to Burke, May 15, 1775. Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings, IV, 24.

²Quoted from original mss. in Priestley, Theological and Miscellaneous Works, I, 277.

³Price to Josiah Quincy, May, 1775. See Massachusetts Historical Society, Proceedings, ser. 2, XVII, 287.

philosophy were correlated closely with his revolutionary political opinions. That his attitude toward the Colonists was far more liberal than that of Pitt or Burke is evident from a dissertation On the State of Affairs in America, written February 25, 1775, and his Observations on Civil Liberty, published early in 1776.¹ In the first he contended emphatically that the American cause was that of liberty and that the Colonists must look to themselves for deliverance. In the second he explained, much more explicitly than Franklin had, the nature of Civil Liberty and the fact that any country is in a state of slavery when it is subject to the legislature of an alien State in which it has no voice.² Stephens and Lee in the National Dictionary of Biography spoke of the latter pamphlet as an influence in encouraging the Declaration of Independence. Evidence to establish this assertion is lacking. The fact that Price's liberal political views supplemented his religious liberalism precludes granting Franklin credit for having influenced his bias in favor of the Colonists. On the other hand, it seems more likely that their friendship was strengthened by their oneness in this cause, which was of especially great moment to Franklin.

Priestley, of whose relations with Franklin more is known than of any other English Liberal, save Strahan and possibly Hartley, has left a full account of Franklin's last days in England. Slightly interested in politics, Priestly had been persuaded in 1768 to expand his views on Civil Liberty into An Address to Dissenters,³ a discussion of the differences with America. Priestley

¹Ibid.

²Price, Observations on Civil Liberty, 27f.

³Memoirs of Dr. Joseph Priestley, 60.

appeared to have made no further effort to influence the course of political events. Priestley's accounts of Franklin's last days in England illustrates more clearly than anything else, the sincerity of Franklin's attempts to preserve peace. Priestley, for instance, recorded that "A great deal of the day above mentioned that we spent together, he (Franklin) was looking over a number of newspapers, directing me what to extract from them for the English ones; and in reading them he was frequently not able to proceed for the tears literally running down his cheeks."¹ After his arrival in America, Franklin continued his correspondence with Priestley, five letters of which are now available.² Political affairs of America were the all-absorbing topics. Franklin related to Priestley, as one intimate friend would to another, the manner in which he conducted his affairs, so closely related to public events. Among other bits of news he told of the sending of the last petition to the Crown, upon which he commented that Great Britain had "not sense enough to embrace" and he concluded that "she had lost them forever."³ This is a first evidence of Franklin's opinion that independence was not only possible but probable.

Always frank in his criticism of the British diplomatic and military conduct of American affairs, Franklin apparently met in Priestley a hearty response to his views. In an extant letter of February 13, 1776, Priestley, in his remarks upon an enclosed

¹Theological and Miscellaneous Works of Joseph Priestley, 450.

²(a)Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), VI, 400, 408, 429; X, 290; (b)(Sparks ed.) VIII, 171; (c)Pennsylvania Magazine of History, XXIX, 169.

³Franklin to Priestley, July 7, 1775. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) VI, 408.

pamphlet of Price's said that he hoped it would make some impression "upon this infatuated nation." Speaking of the Club of Honest Whigs, to which Franklin formerly belonged, he said that "our zeal in the good cause is not abated."¹

Franklin's relations with Chatham were unlike those with Priestley in this respect; in the latter case there is no attempt on either side to secure or give knowledge for the purpose of using it to determine the course of political events. That Priestley's contact with Shelburne, which lasted until 1778,² served to influence that man favorably toward Franklin is likely, but cannot be definitely determined. Priestley mentioned in the letter of February 13 that both Shelburne and Barre were "pleased with your remembrance of them, and desire their best respects and good wishes in return."

Friend and associate of Pownall, David Hartley, another Liberal British statesman was also a friend of Franklin, whom he met soon after 1759, while a student at Lincoln's Inn. As a representative of Hull in Parliament from 1774 to 1780, he was ever an advocate of American rights.³ His plan of conciliation represented the views of the advanced Whigs in its proposal for voluntary requisitions "for the purpose of defending, protecting, and securing the said Colonies" and in its protest against the restraint of colonial commerce and manufacture.⁴ In the only available

¹Pennsylvania Magazine of History, XXVII, 169, 171.

²Stephens and Lee, Dictionary of National Biography, XVI, 357.

³Gentleman's Magazine, 1814, Part 1, 95. Proposition for conciliation with America, Parliamentary History of England, XVIII, 552. For other debates in which Hartley championed the Colonies, see: 574, 599, 1042, 1103.

⁴Parliamentary History of England, XVIII, 558 f.

Franklin-Hartley letter for this period, the former observed that "a separation will of course be inevitable" and that he deplored the despoiling of so fair a plan (British Empire) at the hands of a few blundering ministers.¹ The tone is friendly, but other evidence of their intimacy at this time is lacking.

Rather difficult it is to place the unique relationships of Franklin and Thomas Paine. Although the latter was early filled with a desire to try his fortunes in America, family ties prevented. At twenty-five, he was appointed excise man at Thetford. When his fellow workers wanted an increase in salary, Paine, acting as their spokesman, wrote a pamphlet in their behalf, and in 1773-4 spent several months in London. His efforts failed, and on April 8, 1774, he was dismissed from the excise.² While in London he made Franklin's acquaintance. The latter recognized his ability and helped him to establish himself in the New World. In a letter to Richard Bache, Franklin requested aid for Paine in securing a position as clerk or tutor until some better opportunity^{should} present itself. A reply of Paine's on March 4, 1775, shows him already established as an assistant in editing a magazine, in which position he was evidently successful.³

The Intelligence, transmitted to the Earl of Carlisle in 1779, related that Franklin had recommended Paine to his son, the Governor, as a secretary, but that the former preferred to settle in Philadelphia.⁴

¹Franklin to Hartley, October 3, 1775, Franklin Papers in Library of Congress.

²Conway, Paine, I, 12, 14.

³Franklin to Bache, September 30, 1774. Paine to Franklin March 4, 1775. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 137 f.

⁴Paper of Intelligence, no. 2, February 1, 1779. See B. F. Stevens, Facsimiles, no. 115.

That Franklin recognized both the latent ability and the trend of thought of Paine, seems probable. Although, in the years preceding his removal to America, Paine's mind was occupied with the business of making a livelihood and with science, he frequently discussed, as he himself has said, political opinions that were later incorporated in the Age of Reason.¹ Then too, his action in behalf of the excise men placed him as a fearless leader among radicals.

Little did Paine think when he first arrived in America that within one year he would be producing a pamphlet which was to crystallize the spirit for independence.² Upon his arrival in America, Paine viewed the "dispute as a kind of lawsuit" and had "no thoughts of independence or of arms."³ In spite of the statement of Parton in his Life of Franklin which credits Franklin with a direct influence in the production of Common Sense, there is no evidence to that effect. On the contrary, both John Adams and Dr. Rush, a Pennsylvania radical who was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, credit the latter with having suggested the production of Common Sense.⁴ Rush claims further that Paine read the sheets to him and Franklin. Paine, on the other hand, when speaking of Common Sense in 1776, observed that "he expected to surprise the Doctor (Franklin) and send him the first pamphlet. In 1802, he said that as with Common Sense, he consulted nobody nor let anybody see what he wrote until it appeared publicly."⁵ Whether

¹Conway, Paine, I, 37.

²For opinions on Common Sense, see Writings of Washington (Ford ed.) IV, 4; and American Archives, ser. IV, 831, 920.

³Conway, Paine, II, Appendix A; 435 has quotation from crisis... Cobbetts Mss.

⁴Adams, Works, II, 507; Conway, Paine, I, 67.

⁵Ibid., 68 f.

or not Rush suggested and aided in the publication of Common Sense, there is no evidence to show that Franklin was directly concerned in its production. Franklin adds to the impression that he had nothing directly to do with it in a letter which introduced Paine to Charles Lee. He observed, "I know his sentiments are not very far different from yours. He is the reputed and, I think, the real author of Common Sense...."¹ Adams, whose picture of Paine is somewhat biased, said that upon the latter's arrival in Philadelphia he ran about the public places in search of popular phrases. The most popular appeared to be independence, from which Paine patched together an essay, at the suggestion of Dr. Rush, who also named it Common Sense. Robert Morris, another Pennsylvania radical, is said to have aided Paine in the publication of the Crisis.²

Certain it is that under democratic influences, Paine rapidly developed a spirit for independence and for a republican form of government. Franklin secured for Paine a successful establishment in Philadelphia; other Pennsylvania Liberals encouraged his writing for their cause.

In conclusion, Franklin's relations with English Liberals during the years 1774-1776 were based in many cases upon friendships of several years' standing. The impression which Franklin gave such men as Burke, Priestley and Shelburne of the Colonists' willingness to conciliate, must have had some effect in their criticism of the government's blundering measures. But this

¹Franklin to Charles Lee, February 19, 1776, Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 174.

²Quoted from Morris' Diary, cited in Diplomatic Correspondence, XII, 95, Writings of George Washington, X, 80.

can not be overrated in view of the fact that their sympathy with the Colonists' cause continued after their intercourse with Franklin was checked. In only one case is it possible to trace a definite impression made by Franklin, through one of these Liberals, upon the course of events. Franklin's assurance to Pitt of the loyalty of the Colonists decided that statesman to exert all of his efforts for a peaceful settlement.

CHAPTER III

WAR AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE

Upon Franklin's arrival in Philadelphia, he found Pennsylvania in a state of revolution against the proprietary government and a spirit of unrest in the Colonies. Whatever regrets he may have held for the impending crisis while in England, Franklin, upon his arrival in America, soon became a leader among the radicals. On May 6, 1775, he was chosen by the Assembly of Pennsylvania to attend the Continental Congress;¹ on July 3, Franklin was unanimously chosen as President of the Committee of Safety. This group became the virtual legislative body of Pennsylvania, dominated by the Radicals of that State.² Determination to win the struggle and a belief in its ultimate success were the keynotes of his correspondence with Liberal English friends immediately following his return to America.³ A letter to Charles Lee the following February showed that Franklin recognized that although the English "still talk big," they showed a tendency to "come to their senses." But Franklin also revealed the fact that he now desired to carry the matter further. For instance, he suggested that it was too late for the British to come to a compromise.⁴ The change in his attitude from one of striving for conciliation and of regret

¹ Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), X, 286.

² Colonial Records, X, 282.

³ Franklin to Priestley, October 3, 1775. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), VIII, 160 f.

⁴ Franklin to Charles Lee, February 11, 1776. Ibid., 169.

at the impending war, to a spirit of resistance was due rather to the continued blunders of the Ministry than to the fact that he was distant from the influence of his English friends. In a letter of October, 1775, he again expressed his "ardent desire for peace," but it is evident that he had begun to realize its futility. For instance, he added that "every ship from Britain brings some intelligence of new measures that tend more and more to exasperate."¹

For various reasons, Franklin's correspondence with his British friends was checked, especially in the first three years of the war. To Hartley, he explained that he "had written very little because the post was not to be trusted."² Priestley lamented "this unhappy war," the more because it rendered his correspondence so precarious."³

To Strahan, who followed the administration during the war, Franklin seemed not to have corresponded before 1781, although the former wrote him not less than three letters, discussions of private affairs.⁴ Apparently, from a letter written by Franklin in 1775 but never sent, his bitterness toward the political adherence of the old friend was too great to permit a friendly correspondence.⁵ The fact that this letter was never sent adds to the evidence that

¹ Franklin to a friend in England, February 11, 1776. Writings of Benjamin Franklin, (Sparks ed.), VIII, 161.

² Franklin to Hartley, October 14, 1777. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), VII, 68.

³ Priestley to Franklin, February 13, 1776. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 171; (Smyth ed.), VIII, 335.

⁴ Strahan to Franklin, January 23, 1777; November 21, 1777; July 14, 1778. (See Hays, Calendar of Franklin Papers in American Philosophical Society, II)

⁵ Franklin to Strahan, July 5, 1775. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) VI, 407.

Franklin could not continue a correspondence on the old basis and preferred its discontinuance to a quarrel.¹

With Priestley, there was merely a desultory correspondence throughout the Revolution. Only three letters exist for this period. About half of the space in these is devoted to political affairs. Franklin's attitude toward the cause of the war and toward England's conduct of it was well shown in his observation that England apparently had "no cause but malice against liberty and the jealousy of commerce." It is impossible to believe that one who wished "that men would cease to be Wolves to one another and that Human beings would at length learn what they now improperly call Humanity," should have worked to bring about an aggressive war. That his hatred of the originators of this war did not extend to the English as such is evident from his reiteration of his love of "the honest souls that meet at the London Coffee House" and that he "labored for peace " with the more earnestness in order to "again be happy in their sweet society."² More than Franklin's aversion to war, to this one between brothers in particular; than the evidence he showed of disinterested sincerity in the relationship with one Liberal/^{at}least, this correspondence does not show.

In contrast with his confidential tone in the correspondence with Priestley, that with Price shows evidences of formality. Price had mentioned in a letter to Van Derk that their correspondence had ceased from "mutual regard".³ Yet four letters exist for

¹Franklin to Strahan, December 4, 1781. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), VIII, 335.

²Franklin to Priestley, January 27, 1777. Ibid., VII; June 7, 1782, VIII, 451.

³Ibid., X, 325.

this period of the war. Of the two written by Price, one was a mere matter of form, but the other was interesting in view of the fact that in discussing the political situation in the third person, Price was apparently hoping to inform Franklin and, in return, to receive news of political interest.¹ The cause of this formality on Price's part is not hard to seek. Upon every occasion, he opposed the war in vigorous pamphlets.² Speaking of this to John Winthrop, he said, "I am become a person so marked and obnoxious that prudence requires me to be very cautious. So true is this that I avoid all correspondence with Dr. Franklin, though so near me as Paris."³

By 1780 the Opposition had gained a better hearing in England. A dissatisfaction with the American War was not quieted by the difficulties which arose in Europe and in Ireland. From then, there was more Franklin correspondence with English friends than before. Two letters from Franklin to Price revealed his affection for his friends of Ludgate Hill and his characteristically frank criticism of the English government. He observed, for instance, that it was impossible for the English to secure an honest Parliament because "there was not Virtue enough left to procure one."⁴ After the fall of the North Ministry in March, 1782, and the advent of the Rockinghams, Franklin must have been more hopeful of the conduct of the war, for he congratulated Price upon the change and

¹Price to Franklin, October 14, 1799, Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VII, 395. Price to Franklin, June 15, 1777, Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections, XVII, 310.

²Stephens and Lee, Dictionary of National Biography.

³Price to Winthrop, June 15, 1777, Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections, XVII, 311.

⁴Franklin to Price, October 9, 1780. Writings of Benjamin Franklin, (Smyth ed.) VIII, 153.

remarked that he hoped to hear from him "as often as may be convenient." He again sent his respects to his friends of the London Coffee House.¹ As in the case of Priestley, Franklin's relations with Price were those of sincere, disinterested friendship. No doubt both men exerted influence in favor of their friend upon their patron, Shelburne. As far as Franklin was concerned, it is evident that this relationship of these two good friends made no difference in his attitude toward them.

With Hartley, on the other hand, Franklin's correspondence during the Revolution -- after 1777 -- was voluminous. This was due, first, to their negotiations in respect to the exchange of prisoners and, second, to their relations to the peace negotiations. On October 14, 1777, Franklin in a letter to Hartley, spoke warmly of the cruelties of war. He then suggested that an act of generosity toward the American prisoners might soften this resentment. Franklin requested Hartley to take measures for the relief of the most needy American war prisoners, at the expense of the former. He also requested Hartley to propose in Parliament a better treatment of the prisoners, and an exchange.² In acknowledgment of Hartley's efforts to alleviate the condition of the prisoners, Franklin sent him a letter of thanks and £100.³ Hartley also made many efforts to secure an exchange of prisoners. Although it is evident from a letter of June 16 that Franklin anticipated an early

¹Franklin to Price, June 13, 1782. Ibid., VIII, 457.

²Franklin to Hartley, October 14, 1777. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 223.

³Franklin to Hartley, February 12, 1778. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) VII, 101.

exchange, and although Hartley informed him on August 14 that the administration had given their consent to an early exchange at Calais, the ships did not appear.¹ It was not until 1782, after the advent of the Rockingham ministry, that an order was actually issued for a release of the prisoners.²

Hartley's relations with Franklin from 1776 until 1783 were inseparably linked with the negotiations between England, France, and the United States.

The outbreak of hostilities between Britain and her Colonies presented to France the long sought opportunity to avenge herself upon her old enemy, England. Vergennes, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, brought pressure to bear to grasp this opportunity to humiliate their old rival. He secured for the Colonies a loan of one million livres and induced Spain to make another. In the meantime, the Colonists had, in November, 1775, resolved that a "Committee of Five be appointed for the sole purpose of corresponding with our friends in Great Britain, Ireland, and other parts of the World."³ Although Franklin thought that "a virgin state should....not go abroad suitoring for alliances,"⁴ he was placed upon the above mentioned committee, and in September of the following year, he and Jefferson with Deane, who had gone as agent for the Continental Congress in March, was appointed to go to

¹(a) Franklin to Hartley, May 25, 1778. Ibid., X, 155.

(b) Hartley to Franklin, June 16, 1778. Works of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 295.

²Hartley to Franklin, May 13, 1782. Ibid., IX, 247, 294.

³Journals of Congress, III, 392.

A motion of Samuel Chase to send envoys to France had failed. See Chase to Adams, July 9, 1776. John Adams, Works, IX, 420.

⁴Foster, Century of American Diplomacy, 9.

France for financial and diplomatic aid.¹ Upon Franklin's arrival in France in December, 1776,² he attempted to secure an audience with Vergennes, but was forced to content himself with the sending of a formal letter.³ His reception in France was a royal one; it is not surprising that the English were apprehensive of a coalition between the Colonies and France, and that they took measures to prevent it. Lord Stormont, assisted by large numbers of spies, kept Lord North informed, first, of the transactions of Silas Deane and, later of those of all of the commissioners.⁴

That Hartley was well aware of these transactions is evident from his correspondence with Franklin. Although a Liberal of the Rockingham connection and a sympathizer with the Colonists, he did not sympathize with their negotiations with France. In spite of English efforts to prevent it, the American Negotiators secured an alliance with France, February 6, 1778.⁵ It is evident that Lord North realized the precarious situation, for he laid before the House of Commons propositions for settlement with America. They were terms that the Colonists were disposed to accept before the Declaration of Independence. Hartley lost no time in transmitting this news to Franklin. He added the anxious comment that he hoped "in God it has not come too late," and the compliment that the recent change in measures was due to Franklin's "wise and temperate counsels" and to the knowledge of his friendly, "magnani-

¹Wharton, Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution, I, 334; II, 78.

²Franklin to Deane, December 4, 1776. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), VI, 470.

³Franklin to Vergennes, December 23, 1776. Ibid., VI, 477.

⁴Van Tyne, American Revolution (American Nation Series, IX), 213.

⁵Ibid.

mous affection to this country." It is possible that Hartley had succeeded in impressing upon North's mind the fact that "the only hopes of peace rested upon Franklin's prudent and temperate management", for that minister had encouraged Hartley's correspondence with Franklin.¹ This belated scheme of reconciliation and the recognition of Franklin's ability and viewpoint did not provoke from him the hoped for response. Franklin considered the proposition of an armistice upon vague terms impossible, for under such conditions the British ministry might do "everything that will have a tendency to divide us and nothing that can afford us security." Apparently he was not averse to negotiating a peace, if any importance may be attached to the postscript which he added. Franklin's ability as a diplomatist is revealed in this casual suggestion that, should such men as Hartley come to Paris, they might "not only obtain a peace with America, but prevent a war with France."² This suggestion was acted upon by the Ministry. In April, it was reported to Vergennes that Hartley, who was openly attached to Rockingham and secretly to Lord North, had sought conferences with the American representatives. Although he had no written powers, it was thought that the character of his visit was official.³ Hartley's insinuations that a separate peace be negotiated met a cold response.

In January, 1778, before the alliance with France was consummated, James Hutton appeared in Paris. He came for the ostensible

¹Hartley to Franklin, February 18, 1778. Stevens, Facsimiles, 789.

²Franklin to Hartley, February 26, 1778. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 241.

³Monsieur Frances to Vergennes, April 26, 1778. Stevens, Facsimiles, 1919.

purpose of consulting Franklin about the Moravians in America, but in the eyes of the French, he came to seek terms for negotiation and for preventing a French Alliance.¹ Hutton was well thought of in the King's Court. He informed Monsieur Grand that the King would now grant the Colonists 'everything they might ask, except the word independence.'²

Notwithstanding his affection for his old friend, Franklin was not blind to the official hand that prompted Hutton's visit. In a letter of February 1, that wiley diplomatist gave Hutton some very good terms for reconciliation. His bold suggestion that England hand over Canada and Nova Scotia to the Americans was made under cover of the supposition that England's wisest policy should be to breed good will with the Americans after her cruelties of the war. This assertion reveals, moreover, the fact that Franklin realized that the Americans possessed no valid claims to those territories.³ A second indication of Franklin's realization of the real object of Hutton's visit is found in a letter of the former to Hartley. He remarked that although there was apparently no connection between Hutton and the King, in his (Franklin's) mind there was.⁴ Hutton's efforts to secure more satisfactory proposals for peace negotiations having proved ineffectual, their correspondence upon that subject closed. In his letters to Hutton, Franklin placed so much emphasis upon personal regard for his old friend, that there was no hint of his suspicions of the real character of Hutton's

¹Chaumont to Vergennes, January 5, 1778. Stevens, Facsimiles, 771.

²Monsieur Grand to Vergennes, January 1, 1778. Ibid., 1819.

Chaumont to Vergennes, January 1, 1778. Ibid., 1816.

³Franklin to Hutton, February 1, 1778. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), VIII, 230-4.

⁴Franklin to Hartley, February 12, 1778. Ibid., 236.

mission. Moreover, he did not allow friendship to betray him into committing his country to any definite proposals with an unofficial emissary.

In close touch with the Shelburne ministry, Benjamin Vaughan was somewhat less willing to concede the demands of the Colonists than had been Price. In reply to a letter of May 11, 1782, which suggested the feasibility of Shelburne's Plan of Union under the King, but with independent Parliaments, Franklin said that such a thing was impossible.¹ On the eve of the signing of the preliminaries of peace, Vaughan again wrote to Franklin, begging him to hasten the negotiations and to act generously toward England -- but he admitted to Franklin that justice was on the side of the Americans.² That he did not consider the actions of the Americans generous, is evident from a later letter in which he praised the liberal treatment granted them by Shelburne and intimated that England had been bound down to a hard peace "thereby putting so many people into ill humour."³ With his characteristic shrewdness, Franklin refused to believe that Vaughan could have meant the terms of the treaty when he spoke of a "hard" peace. He made it clear that it was the Americans rather than Shelburne with whom the power of granting concessions lay, and he added that the Americans were "exceeding favourable in not insisting upon reparations so justly due."⁴ References in and the character of a letter written to

¹Franklin to Vaughan, July 11, 1782. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), IX, 362.

²Vaughan to Franklin, November 27, 1782. Ibid., 433.

³Vaughan to Franklin, February 25, 1783. Ibid., IX, 489.

⁴Franklin to Vaughan, March, 1784. Ibid., X, 70.

Vaughan in 1785 reveal the fact that the ^{two men} / were mutually interested in science as well as in politics.¹

After 1778, overtures for peace became more frequent. Although unauthorized to treat for peace before 1783, Hartley corresponded with Franklin respecting negotiations, and at times acted as a "mediator on his own account". The things for which Franklin stood, relative to peace negotiations in the fall of 1778 were: first, that independence was necessary; second, that no treaty was possible without the assent of France; and third, that to cultivate the friendship of the United States, which had been lost, Great Britain would be wise to "cede all that remains of North America and thus conciliate and strengthen a young Power which she wishes to have as a useful and serviceable friend"² Always opposed to an alliance between the Colonies and France, Hartley did not give up hope of a separate peace after the formal alliance in 1778. Hartley observed that an "alliance between France and America is a great stumbling block" and he hinted that it might be relinquished to bring about peace.³ Franklin warmly replied that they would not consider relinquishing an alliance with one of the "most amiable, as well as most powerful princes of Europe for the terms of an unknown peace."⁴ Hartley continued, however, to hint at the advantages of a separate peace.⁵ In February, 1780, Franklin reiterated his position respecting a separate peace when he said that the

¹Franklin to Vaughan, April 22, 1785. Ibid., VI, 454.

²Franklin to Hartley, October 26, 1778. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), VII, 194.

³Hartley to Franklin, September 3, 1778. Ibid., 186.

⁴Franklin to Hartley, February 3, 1779. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.), VIII, 316.

⁵Franklin to Hartley, February 22, 1779. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.), VII, 234.

"destruction of our whole country and the extirpation of our whole people (is)preferable to the Infamy of abandoning our allies."¹

That Hartley sought an opening for negotiations in the House is evidenced by a conciliatory bill which he sent to Franklin in that year. The bill had failed but Hartley forwarded it, expressing the hope that some means might be found for bringing the war to a close.²

When writing to Hartley of fires in play-houses, December, 1781, Franklin made the chance remark that he hoped some happy invention might be found to stop the spreading of the flames of war.³ With the impression that Franklin was willing to treat for a separate peace, Hartley hastened to inform North. Affairs had not been running smoothly for the ministry, and North lent a willing ear. He wished to know who was authorized by the Americans to treat for peace and whether these propositions came from responsible persons.⁴ Since Franklin had previously had on more than one occasion expressed his views of a separate peace, this caused him no small irritation. He reminded his friend that he (Hartley) had often mentioned this on former occasions and that "it gave him more disgust than his friendship for Hartley permitted him to express." Franklin added that "there was not a man in America, a few English Tories excepted, who would not spurn the thought of deserting a

¹ Franklin to Hartley, February 2, 1780. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) VIII, 414.

Hartley to Franklin, July 17, 1780. Ibid., VIII, 480.

² Franklin to Hartley, February 2, 1780. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) VIII.

³ Franklin to Hartley, December 15, 1781. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 112.

⁴ Hartley to Franklin, January 2, 1782. Ibid., IX, 122.

noble and generous friend for the sake of a truce with an unjust and cruel enemy."¹ Hartley hastened to explain that Alexander had given him the impression that the French were "disposed to consent to it."² Thus ended Hartley's attempts to influence Franklin to consent to a separate peace. That Hartley's wishes were partially realized when the actual negotiations took place between America and Great Britain without France's knowledge, was due rather to Jay than to Franklin.

About a month after Hartley's hopes for a separate peace had been shattered, the unpopularity of the conduct of the war resulted in the resignation of North, March 20, 1782. Rockingham, who had advocated the severing of the Franco-American Alliance by the acknowledgement of the Independence of the Colonies as early as 1778, became Prime Minister. Shelburne, a liberal and a patron of Priestley, was appointed Secretary of Colonial and Home Affairs, and Fox, a friend of the Colonists, became Secretary of Foreign Affairs.³

Although given no position in the negotiations for peace, Hartley continued to correspond with Franklin upon that subject. He had handed in to the Ministry on February 7 a Breviate with suggestions for peace negotiations, but no action had been taken upon it. After the change of Ministry, a number of letters from Franklin prompted him to lay the same proposals before Shelburne.⁴ The latter had made it clear to Hartley that the Americans were ready to treat for peace;⁵ that five persons were commissioned and disposed to

¹Franklin to Hartley, February 15, 1782. Ibid., 141.

²Hartley to Franklin, January 24, 1782. Ibid., 149.

³Winsor, Narrative and Critical History, VII, 98.

⁴Hartley to Franklin, May 13, 1782. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 294.

⁵Franklin to Hartley, April 5, 1782. Ibid., 194.

carry on peace negotiations, and that he hoped that a "change of ministry would be attended by salutary effects."¹ But Franklin emphasized the fact that he considered his relations with Hartley purely of a private nature, since the latter had no commission to treat and since Franklin was only one of five.²

A reminder to Hartley that the first act of reconciliation under the new ministry might well be the release of American prisoners of war, apparently resulted in an order for the same.³ Hartley replied on May 25 that he had received from Shelburne a notice of an order for the release of American prisoners "in answer to that part of your letter of the 5th of April...."⁴

Although not commissioned to treat for peace, Hartley, on the same date, extended his personal services to Franklin to assist in "any communications or explanations conducive to peace."⁵ Not until 1783 did he enter actively into the negotiations for peace. A minor duty of attending to the interests of American refugees was granted him by the new Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Townshend, in July,⁶ but he declined any concern in it, because of the uncertainty of the "state of negotiation."

Realizing that further union between Great Britain and America was impossible, Hartley proposed a commercial co-partnership

¹ Franklin to Hartley, March 31, 1782. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 192.

² Franklin to Hartley, April 5, 1782. Ibid., 194.

³ Ibid., Hartley to Franklin, May 25, 1782. Ibid., 301.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 302.

⁶ Hartley to Franklin, July 26, 1782. Ibid., 371.

to Franklin in a letter of October 4, 1782, but this suggestion seems not to have been acted upon. There is no available correspondence until the following spring.

Preliminaries of Peace were at last agreed upon and signed November 30, 1782.¹ That the American commissioners were satisfied with the outcome is apparent from a letter of Franklin to Samuel Cooper in December.² But such a storm of protest met the proposal of the Preliminaries in Parliament that Shelburne resigned on February 24.³ With the accession of the coalition, Fox commissioned Hartley to succeed Oswald in the conclusion of the negotiations for peace.

Displeased with the definitive treaty as it stood, the new Ministry hoped to secure terms more favorable to the British. Various proposals were made but were not carried out. Among them, Hartley proposed a measure on behalf of the Loyalists and former owners of land.⁴ At length the definitive treaty as it had been agreed upon under Shelburne, was signed September 3, 1783, in Paris and was later ratified, first, by the United States, January 14, 1784, and, second, by England, April 9, 1784.⁵ In accordance with Hartley's dreams/^{for} a commercial co-partnership, there were negotiations for the regulation of trade which, however, came to naught. After the conclusion of the treaty, Hartley informed Franklin that he

¹ Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 435.

² Franklin to Cooper, December 26, 1782. Ibid., 462.
See also Parton, Franklin, II, 504.

³ Fitzmaurice, Shelburne, III, 162.

⁴ Winsor, Narrative and Critical History, VII, 89, 104.

⁵ Parton, Franklin, II, 505.

anticipated receiving the instructions for a temporary commercial convention on similar grounds to his own proposal of May 19, 1783.¹ Franklin's reply that "there is sense enough in America to take care of her own china vase,"² his assurance of the progress in the United States, and his statement that he would "consider attentively the proposition", reveal no eagerness on his part to enter into a commercial alliance with Great Britain.

Thus closed the negotiations for peace. The United States had not yielded on the point of compensating the Loyalists; they had secured a recognition of their independence,³ liberal boundaries, and their fishery rights, but they had not secured Canada. How much of these terms were due to Franklin? Did his relations with English Liberals affect the terms as finally ratified?

The answer to the first question depends upon the second. From the study of his correspondence, it seems that he came into contact with his more intimate London friends, namely Price and Priestley, so little during this period that their mutual influence cannot be considered. With Burke and Chatham he had no direct relation during this period. Only one letter is available, that from Franklin to Burke on the subject of General Burgoyne, which has no relation to the negotiations for peace. Benjamin Vaughan, who was sent by Shelburne to Paris, dealt more directly with Jay. It was the latter who prevailed upon him to go to London to counteract Rayneval's influence and through whose efforts Oswald at length

¹Hartley to Franklin, September 24, 1783. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 18.

²Franklin had before the war compared the British Empire to a china vase.

³Shelburne issued Oswald's commission to treat with the United States of America, September 24, 1782. Winsor, VIII, 101 f.

received instructions to treat with the "United States of America."¹

Franklin's relations with the English friends during this period, as it affected British-American relations, resolves itself into his relations with Hartley. Although the latter corresponded with Franklin on the subject of peace throughout the period 1776-1783, the period of his greatest interest was 1778-1782, during which time, as has been mentioned, he was acting with the approval of North and was apparently a secret emissary.

The objects that he wished to accomplish were: first, a relief and exchange of American prisoners of war; second, the prevention of a Franco-American Alliance. When that was consummated, he exerted all his powers to secure a separate peace. Third, he hoped to secure a commercial union of the United States and Great Britain on the same commercial basis as existed between them before the war.² He secured relief to the American prisoners, but failed to bring about the exchange until May, 1782. In the remaining points he failed to influence Franklin to yield.

When he succeeded Oswald, Hartley failed to secure the commercial advantages hoped for, and the original definitive treaty over which he had had no direct influence went into effect.

This failure was apparently due to his anxiety for peace, running through his whole correspondence, which was met by Franklin's anxiety for independence, and an advantageous treaty, rather than for peace. Franklin's influence was felt principally from 1776 to 1781. During those years the foundations were laid for a recognition of the new United States, and second, through an alliance

¹Ibid., VII, 165.

²Hartley to Franklin, September 24, 1783. Writings to Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 18.

with France, for a victory with an advantageous peace. In his relations with Hutton, Franklin refused to commit himself or his country; the same was true in the case of Hartley.

CHAPTER IV

FRANKLIN'S RELATIONS WITH THE ENGLISH LIBERALS 1783-1789

The preliminaries of peace having been signed, Franklin was employed in making treaties with other countries, and in a vain attempt to conclude a commercial treaty with Great Britain.¹ Hoping that a "co-partnership of commerce" might cement a union between the two countries, Hartley, in 1782, had drawn up a proposal for a temporary convention.² No agreement could be made during the peace negotiations, and Hartley informed Franklin in 1784 that a document concerning American trade would soon be placed before Parliament.³ Although, as Franklin informed Hartley, the Americans were ready and willing to negotiate such a treaty, nothing came of it.⁴

Franklin requested his recall three times. At length, on March 7, 1785, it was granted, and Franklin lost no time in starting home.⁵ As the ship in which he was to sail left Portsmouth, Franklin crossed the channel. While awaiting its arrival at Southampton, he bade a number of his English friends farewell. Among them were the Bishop of St. Asaph and Vaughan.⁶ Hartley was within a mile of Southampton when the ship sailed.⁷ During the closing

¹Parton, Life and Times of Franklin, II, 507.

²Hartley to Franklin, October 2, 1782. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 416.

³Hartley to Franklin, July 27, 1784. Franklin Papers.

⁴Franklin to Hartley, January 3, 1785. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) IX, 284.

⁵Parton, Franklin, II, 534; Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) IX, 365, 530.

⁶Ibid., 527.

⁷Hartley to Franklin, August 24, 1785. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) X, 221.

years of his life, Franklin continued his correspondence with only a few of his former English friends and acquaintances. With such men as Price, Hartley, Vaughan, and Strahan, his correspondence reveals some striking similarities, especially when it dealt with political subjects.

With Priestley, Franklin's correspondence during the closing years of the war was desultory, and none is extant after 1784. Science and philosophy were the principal topics of discussion in the few existing.¹

Science and political affairs were the chief topics of mutual interest to Franklin and Price. Their political discussions reveal a similarity of viewpoint respecting British and American affairs, but Franklin was far more severe in his criticism of England and lavish in his praise of the United States. That Price recognized the advantages for progress which the United States possessed over England was expressed in a moderate way in a letter of April 6, 1784.² He feared that their bad system of representation would necessitate a convulsion before effective Reform could come about. In contrast he commented upon the greater opportunities for a better state of affairs in the United States. Franklin's reply expressed similar views in much stronger terms. In speaking of the English, he remarked that when he thought of their "present crazy constitution and its Diseases," he doubted whether even the reform of representation would cure the evils constantly arising from perpetual Factions.³ With this, he contrasted the

¹See index, Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.).

²Price to Franklin, April 6, 1784. Ibid., X, 78.

³Franklin to Price, August 16, 1784. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) IX, 254.

favorable conditions in America. But that his apparent bias did not blind him to the dangers which beset a new country is evident from the comment that he added. Namely, he suggested that the advice of wise friends for preventing the United States' making the errors committed by the older governments would be appreciated.

A similar tone of optimism respecting the United States exists in a letter written the following February. He called attention to the prosperous conditions of his country, and to the fact that the people were generally "very happy under their new governments."¹ Of domestic disorders Franklin said little. In one letter he observed that "we are improving daily in public prudence and in a true knowledge of our essential interests!"² Price echoed Franklin's regret at the attempts to create a misunderstanding between the two countries. Yet his remark that this might after all further the future development of the United States, because of the necessity for independence in the regulation of their commerce, revealed a personal interest in the economic and political progress of the new country, regardless of its effect upon the old.³

From the available correspondence with his English friends, it is apparent that Franklin discussed the disorders reigning within the states only once and that he then observed that "all will end well."⁴ His only comment upon the calling of the Constitutional Convention was that "such amendments as were

¹Franklin to Price, February 1, 1785. Ibid., IX, 286.

²Franklin to Price, July 29, 1786. Ibid., IX, 529.

³Price to Franklin, November 5, 1785. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) IX, 239.

⁴Ibid.

thoroughly necessary" were to be proposed.¹

The same tone of optimism respecting the United States pervades the only letter written to Hartley after Franklin's return to Philadelphia.² Immediately after the signing of the definitive treaty, Franklin praised his countrymen as "more thoroughly enlightened with respect to our political interests than perhaps any other under heaven." Apparently, this was written with design, for he closed the letter with an urgent request for the immediate evacuation of New York.³ In the same fall, he replied to Hartley's hints for the formation of a commercial union, the advantages of which were to be Britain's, with the remark that there "was sense enough in America to take care of their own china vase," and he added that the British newspaper stories of American dissensions were untrue.⁴ Apparently, his purpose was to impress Hartley with the strength and independence of the young republic.

With Vaughan, Franklin likewise corresponded more frequently than during the Revolution. Although their mutual interests were chiefly of a literary nature, a discussion of political affairs found a place. As in his letters to Price, Franklin here revealed a tendency to belittle the political conditions of England in contrast to those of America. In a letter of March 14, 1785, he observed that "it is said by those who know Europe generally, that there are more thefts committed and punished

¹Franklin to Price, May 15, 1787. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) IX, 585.

²Franklin to Hartley, October 27, 1785. Ibid., 472.

³Franklin to Hartley, September 6, 1783. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Sparks ed.) X, 1.

⁴Franklin to Hartley, October 22, 1783. Ibid., 27.

annually in England than in all other nations put together."

He attributed this to her "oppressive conduct to subjects and unjust wars on our neighbors."¹ In comparison to this, he commented upon the humanity shown by the United States in their attempt to abolish privateering, in spite of the fact that they were peculiarly situated to profit thereby. His only comment to Vaughan upon the Constitutional Convention was that "the violence of our party debates about the new constitution seems much abated....and we are getting back into good order."²

A criticism of the British Parliament and of their newspaper accounts respecting conditions in America exists in his letters to Strahan. In February, 1784, before his return to America, Franklin informed Strahan that the English papers were full of accounts of anarchy and confusion in America of which "we know nothing." As in a letter to Price, he attributed the evil in the British Constitution to the enormous salaries of the great offices.³ In August of the same year, Franklin reviewed at length the failure of the British Administration to understand the strength of the Colonists and their consequent inability to conquer them. Yet Franklin's loyalty to his country did not blind him to the fact that their success was due to circumstances rather than their superiority. Franklin called this the "interposition of Providence" in behalf of a just cause.⁴

¹Franklin to Vaughan, March 14, 1785. Writings of Benjamin Franklin (Smyth ed.) IX, 29.

²Franklin to Vaughan, October 24, 1788. Ibid., 675.

³Franklin to Strahan, February 16, 1784. Ibid., 171.

⁴Franklin to Strahan, August 14, 1784. Ibid., 259.

From this correspondence the following conclusions respecting Franklin's relations with his English friends and his attitude toward political affairs in England and in America, may be drawn. First, although expressing personal regard for his friends he did not hesitate to criticize their government severely and to praise his own highly. Price alone assented to his views. Second, during the war he had ceased to admire the British constitution, which he now styled the "old crazy constitution." Third, whatever he may have thought of the disorders in the United States, Franklin refrained from commenting upon them to his English friends. Fourth, Franklin utilized every opportunity to praise the conditions in and government of his country, thereby giving to any possible doubters confidence in it.

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